

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 01195 311235Z

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R 310948Z JAN 75

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3688

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 1195

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, VN, US

SUBJECT: THE CHINESE AND VIETNAM

REF: MOSCOW 1128

SUMMARY.

WHILE IT WILL HAVE PROBLEMS WITH A VICTORIOUS HANOI, PEKING,
IN THE ABSENCE OF A CLEAR U.S. COMMITMENT TO SAIGON, CANNOT BE
EXPECTED TO BLOCK NORTH VIETNAM'S OFFENSIVE.

END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY MOSCOW'S THOUGHTFUL DESCRIPTION OF THE SOVIET
OUTLOOK ON VIETNAM HIGHLIGHTS SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MUST
BE GOING THROUGH MINDS IN PEKING. THE PROSPECT OF AN EARLY
HANOI VICTORY, WITH THE SOVIET UNION'S INFLUENCE HIGH, DOUBTLESS
WORRIES THE CHINESE SINCE THEY CAN BE SURE THAT A HIGH PRIORITY
TASK FOR A UNIFIED VIETNAM WILL BE TO SORT OUT MATTERS WITH
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PAGE 02 HONG K 01195 311235Z

CHINA.

2. THE LIST OF SINO-VIETNAMESE PROBLEMS, CAREFULLY CONCEALED BY BOTH PARTIES BECAUSE OF THE WAR, IS PROBABLY LONGER THAN WE THINK. WE CAN ONLY GUESS THAT IT INCLUDES REGIONAL ISSUES, SUCH AS THE CHINESE ROAD BUILDING IN LAOS. CERTAINLY IT INCLUDES LAST YEAR'S OCCUPATION BY THE CHINESE OF THE PARACEL ISLANDS.

3. WE HAVE REMARKED ON THE PERSISTENCE WITH WHICH CHINESE PROPAGANDA IS ASSERTING CHINA'S HISTORICAL CLAIM TO THE ISLANDS AND THIS VERY LIKELY IS A REFLECTION OF SOMETHING GOING ON BEHIND THE SCENES. WE RECENTLY REPORTED AN INDICATION THAT HANOI HAS PRIVATELY COMPLAINED TO PEKING OVER THE ISLANDS AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE PARACELS HAVE LARGE OIL DEPOSITS MUST INTENSIFY FEELINGS ON BOTH SIDES. THERE SEEMS TO BE NO OTHER CURRENT PRESSURE UPON PEKING SO IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO SPECULATE THAT HANOI ITSELF IS AGITATING CHINA ON THIS ISSUE. IF THAT IS THE CASE, THEN THE CHINESE MUST BE DIGGING IN AND BRACING THEMSELVES FOR A CONFRONTATION. A POSSIBLE INDICATION OF THIS IS THAT THE LAST TWO PROPAGANDA ARTICLES ASSERTING CHINA'S CLAIM WERE IN CHINESE DOMESTIC MEDIA, ADDRESSED TO THE HOME AUDIENCE.

4. EMBASSY MOSCOW IS QUITE RIGHT IN POINTING OUT THE IMPORTANCE OF VIETNAM FOR SOVIET PLANS TO HOLD AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST CONCLAVE HOSTILE TO CHINA. CURRENT CHINESE MANEUVERS, PARTICULARLY CHOU'S RECENT URGING OF THE SOVIETS TO DO "A BIT" TO IMPROVE SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS, LOOK LIKE RENEWED CHINESE EFFORTS TO STALL SUCH A MEETING BY THE WELL-WORN TACTIC OF APPEALING FOR BILATERAL SINO-SOVIET EFFORTS.

5. IN SUM, THE CHINESE, ALTHOUGH THEY ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY SEE HANOI AS ULTIMATELY SUCCESSFUL IN VIETNAM, DO NOT RELISH A DRV VICTORY THE SAME WAY SOVIETS DO. THEIRS IS A MIRROR REVERSE OF MOSCOW'S OUTLOOK BECAUSE THEY WOULD REGARD SUCH A VICTORY AS ADVANCING A TIME OF TROUBLE IN SINO-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS WHICH BENEFITS MOSCOW. HOWEVER, HAVING SAID THAT, WE DO NOT SEE THAT PEKING COULD OR WOULD DO ANYTHING TO SLOW HANOI'S PACE IF THE LATTER DECIDED TO PLUNGE AHEAD. INDEED, PRC WOULD SEE SOME ADVANTAGES IN PLAYING UPON THE FALL OF SAIGON TO HARM U.S.-SOVIET DETENTE. ONLY WAY WE COULD SEE PRC SECRETLY APPLYING

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HONG K 01195 311235Z

THE BRAKES ON HANOI WOULD BE IF THEY PERCEIVED VIETNAM AS A RNEEWED PROBLEM IN U.S.-PRC RELATIONS. THEREFORE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT NEITHER SOVIETS NOR PEKING COULD HAVE COMPELLING INTEREST OR ANY WAY TO BLOCK HANOI UNLESS IT WAS CLEAR THAT U.S. WAS GOING TO GIVE CONTINUOUS, UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT FOR SAIGON. CROSS

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